A Critical Introduction to

ISLAM

LIFE IS A JOURNEY

Ali Al-Tantawi
(1909 - 1999)

Second Edition

A Critical Introduction To Islam

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Ali Al-Tantawi (1909 – 1999)

Translation & Editing : AlifBooks

Publisher: AlifBooks

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ISBN: 9798267919401

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About

The Author

Ali Al-Tantawi (1909-1999) was educated in Damascus University, graduating in 1932 with a law degree. Al-Tantawi combined formal education with private learning under renowned Syrian Islamic and Arabic language scholars.

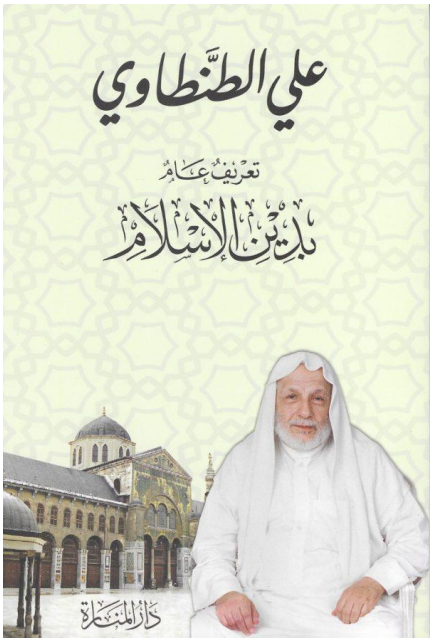
Shaikh Al-Tantawi served as a teacher in different parts of Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon before joining the Judiciary system in Syria, and was involved in formulating family laws during the unity between Egypt and Syria. He was also a journalist since 1926, and one of the first Arab broadcasters serving in radio stations in Java, Baghdad, and Damascus. In addition, he was involved in activities relating to the struggle for independence of various Arab nations from British and French rules, and was therefore subjected to continuous harassment, particularly in the 1940's and 1950's.

In 1963, he moved to Saudi Arabia where he taught for some years at the Shari'a and Arabic Language Colleges in Riyadh and Makkah, before dedicating his full time to writing, counseling, and preaching activities. He impressed a vast audience with his rich knowledge, wisdom, and moderation. He anchored a daily radio program and a weekly television program continuously for 25 years, and both of them were extremely popular. He also authored many books and articles on a wide range of topics and published his memoirs in eight volumes.

This biography was written in the year the prize was awarded.[1]

[1] https://kingfaisalprize.org/sheikh-ali-at-tantawi/

The Original Text



Book Name: تعريف عام بدين الإسلام
Author: علي بن مصطفى الطنطاوي
Publisher: دار المنارة للنشر والتوزيع، جدة
First Edition: 1989
Number of Pages: 190

The origins of this book go back to a series of articles first published in the Saudi newspaper *Al-Madina* in 1969. It was later issued by the Jordanian Ministry of Education in a special edition of its journal *Risalat alMuallim*, and eventually collected into a book that has since been reprinted more than forty times and translated into several languages.

The work consists of five chapters, along with an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction offers a vivid reflection on the nature of humans, moral responsibility, the paths to paradise and hell, the reality of this world, and the reality of the next. This introduction—together with the first chapter, *The Religion of Islam*—was also published separately in a small booklet under the title *A Brief Introduction to Islam*, which itself has been translated into many languages.

The five chapters cover the whole spectrum of faith in a clear and concise manner, accessible to both young and old, and appealing alike to scholars, intellectuals, and the general reader. Three of these chapters serve as an entry point and foundation for the rest of the work: *Life*, *Definitions*, and *Principles of Belief*. The remaining chapters explore the articles of faith with simplicity and clarity: *Faith in God*, *The Oneness of Divinity*, *Faith in the Last Day*, *Faith in Divine Decree*, *Faith in the Unseen*, *Faith in Angels and Jinn*, *Faith in the Messengers*, *Faith in the Scriptures* and *Fruits of Faith*.[2]

[2] http://bit.ly/3IdCrDe

Translation

This edition is unique because,

- An *"abridgment"* ,in Arabic, of the original book was crafted
- Then the "abridgement" was translated from Arabic to English

Such an approach was followed to achieve a more concise, and an accessible version for an English-speaking audience while retaining the meaning of the original.

It was observed that a strictly literal translation would usually lead to cultural expressions that lack context in English and makes the book difficult to understand. Instead, the emphasis was on keeping key concepts and ideas while eliminating repetitions.

Also, translation of the Quran used throughout the book was based on "The Clear Quran" by Dr. Mustafa Khattab.[3]

Why

The idea goes back to 1914. When I noticed that my father used to hold lessons at our home, teaching his students after dawn and before evening prayers.

These lessons were quite different from the ones I attended at school. As his students were scholars so I would listen attentively, even if I didn't fully understand what was being said.

My education, then, was a blend of formal schooling all the way through university, alongside a deep immersion in Islamic sciences, which I received from scholars. Foremost among them was my father, Sheikh Mustafa al, Tantawi, one of the foremost jurists in Damascus and the official advisor on religious rulings to the Grand Mufti "Sheikh Abu al, Khayr Abidin". I also learned from other notable scholars of the time.

This made me among the first in Damascus during that time to combine both traditional religious learning and modern academic education. This dual path awakened me early on to the importance of presenting Islam in a contemporary and accessible manner. I wrote essays on the subject and published several booklets some of which I will include in this book.

In one of my books, I wrote about the necessity of religious belief. I said the following:

"Can a person truly live without religion? This question is no different from asking: Can a human being live on believing only in the material world, rejecting everything

[3] https://theclearquran.org/about-the-translation/

beyond it, including the self, the reality of death, the emotions one carries, and the profound sense of nature and its beauty?"

After presenting the ideas and views of Kant and Pascal, a reflection of my recent engagement with philosophy at the time, I went on to address those who claim that the universe came into being by mere chance.

I wrote:

"If we place four white balls and one red ball into a bag, the chance of drawing the red one is one in five. If we place nine white balls and one red, the chance becomes one in ten. Now imagine placing an infinite number of white balls with just one red, the odds of drawing the red become one in infinity. No reasonable person would claim that, under such conditions, the red ball would inevitably appear once, or twice, or even a hundred times.

And yet, when we look at the countless bodies in this universe, each moving in perfect harmony, avoiding collision, each following a precise order, we find they operate under a single, fine, tuned condition. Can we honestly say that such a state emerged by chance, without the direction of a wise and all, knowing Creator?"

This is what I wrote nearly fifty years ago. Later, I determined to publish a book on the subject with the title "*Why I Am a Muslim"*. I prepared its chapters, announced it publicly, and published parts of the introduction as articles. But the printing was delayed, the original manuscript was lost, and the book was never published.

When I went to Iraq in 1936 to teach Arabic literature at the Central Secondary School in Baghdad, I was, for a time, assigned to teach religion as well. The students began asking me for a single book that would help them understand Islam, not a book on jurisprudence, or legal theory, or Hadith and its terminology. They were after a book on the essence of Islam itself, presented in the way the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would explain it to visiting tribes, clearly, simply, and in a single day.

But I could not find such a book.

In the year 1967, I published an article in *The Muslim World League Journal* titled *A General Introduction to the Religion of Islam*. The article caught the attention of our dear friend, Sheikh Muhammad Umar Tawfiq, who was then the Minister of Hajj and Endowments. He wrote to the League, requesting that I be commissioned to write a full book on the subject.

I devoted the entire summer and the following academic year to the task. But I was often battling laziness, working without much enthusiasm. Over time, I compiled three notebooks filled with completed chapters, alongside scraps of notes and drafts that still needed organizing, editing, and significant effort to bring together.

When the next summer arrived, I traveled to Jordan. Fearing for the safety of these valuable notebooks, I carried them in my own hands. I remember clearly after

landing at the airport, I got into a car headed for my son, in, law's home, with the notebooks beside me.

Once I reached home, having that warm welcome and reconnecting with friends, I completely forgot about them. Two weeks later, I suddenly remembered and searched everywhere but they were gone. I asked every driver I could find, but sadly all my notebooks were lost. I spent days in a state of grief and disbelief. I could neither enjoy my meals nor find rest in sleep. When I finally calmed down, I decided to rely on God and start over again!

At the time, I was in a suburb of Amman. My library was in Damascus, my papers were in Mecca, and all I had with me was a copy of the Quran. I told myself: *Perhaps this is for the best.* After all, I wasn't writing this book for jurists or scholars, but for young people. My aim was to introduce them to the essence of Islam. The less I quoted from books and the more I offered fresh, accessible insights, the more beneficial it would be for them.

So I set to work once again and within ten days, I completed the manuscript of the first part, focusing on the foundations of faith. I carried it with me to Mecca.

The book was first printed in *Al, Madina*, and all credit for its publication belongs to God, then to Mr. Uthman Hafiz. Later, the Jordanian Ministry of Education published it as a special issue of its magazine, *The Teacher's Message*. They printed twelve thousand copies and distributed them to all male and female teachers across the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The credit for that, after God, goes to Dr. Ishaq al, Farhan, the former Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, who at the time was the Director of the Department of Textbooks and Curricula. It also goes to Professor Basheer al, Sabbagh, then Minister of Education, and to our respected colleagues: Dr. Sheikh Ibrahim Zaid al, Kilani and Professor Salim al, Rashdan.

Later, Al-Risalah Publishing House in Beirut released an affordable edition, followed by a more refined and elegant version.

So, O Lord, do not let this effort be in vain. In Your grace and mercy, grant me some reward for it. O Allah, make what I have written and preached part of the beneficial knowledge that continues to bear fruit even after life comes to an end. I seek Your forgiveness, repent to You, and ask You for a good ending and for death upon faith.

Mecca
13 June 1974
Ali At, Tantawi

Surat Al-Fatiha (The Opening) [4]

{**I**n the Name of Allah the Most Compassionate Most Merciful,
All praise is for Allah Lord of all worlds,
The Most Compassionate Most Merciful Master of the Day of Judgment,
You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help,
Guide us along the Straight Path,
The Path of those You have blessed not those You are displeased with, or those who are astray.}

Quran (Chapter 1: Verses1-7)

سُورَةُ الفَاتِحَةِ

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾

ٱلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾

ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾ مَٰلِكِ يَوْمِ ٱلدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾ ٱهْدِنَا

ٱلصِّرَٰطَ ٱلْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾ صِرَٰطَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ

عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ ٱلْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ

وَلَا ٱلضَّآلِّينَ ﴿٧﴾

[4] https://quran.com/surah/1/info

Part 1 | Life

The Path

Imagine you are traveling, and you get to a fork in the road. One path takes you upward through the mountains, steep, rugged. It's difficult to climb and hard to walk. Yet a sign reads:
"Though this path is rough and challenging, it is the right way, the one that leads to the great city, to your true destination."

The other path is smooth and paved, shaded by trees with flowers and fruit. Along its sides are cafés and places of entertainment, offering every delight the heart could desire. But a sign warns:
"This road is dangerous and deadly. It ends in a pit of certain destruction."

Which path would you take?

Naturally, "The-self"[5] leans toward ease and pleasure. It craves freedom and resists restraint. This is the nature God created within us. Left to itself, you would choose the easier road. But the mind intervenes. It weighs immediate pleasure followed by lasting pain against a temporary hardship that ends in lasting joy and chooses the latter. This is the example of choosing between following the path to Paradise and the path to Hell.

The path to Hell is filled with all kinds of temptations, such as gazing upon beauty and its allure, indulging in desire and its pleasures, seeking wealth by any means.

The path to Paradise, on the other hand, demands effort. It is a path of discipline and restraint, of resisting one's desires. But the hardship it involves is temporary, while the joy it leads to is eternal in the hereafter.

It is like a student during exam season, who suffers by avoiding friends and the games they play, choosing instead to study and prepare for exams. Yet after that struggle, they taste the sweetness of success.

God has placed both roads before us and has given us the ability to distinguish between them, to know right from wrong. This inner compass exists in both the learned and the unlearned, the old and the young. Every one of us feels at peace when doing good and troubled when doing wrong.

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[5] The Arabic term "Nafs" refers to the soul and body that together form a "living" human being. From an Islamic perspective, the "Nafs" represents our inclinations and desires, which can lead us to good or drag us to evil.

And this is the meaning of God's saying
{and shown them the two ways of right and wrong}
Quran (Chapter 90: Verse 10)

God has placed along the path to Paradise callers who invite others to it and guide them toward it, they are the prophets. And along the path to Hell, there are also callers who urge people toward it and make it attractive, they are the devils. Honest scholars guide us to the path of the prophets. Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad ﷺ did not inherit wealth or property from him. The scholars, however, have inherited this message from him. And whoever carries it faithfully is worthy of the honor of this message.

But this message is not easy. It challenges humans, to control and restrict their desires. The "human self" longs to chase after pleasure, while religion holds it back. So those who invite to pleasure and indulgence align with the soul's desires, and people follow them effortlessly, like water flowing downhill. Try standing on top of a mountain and watch water descend to settle in the valley, it takes no effort. But if you want to bring it back up, you'll need powerful pumps.

This is the nature of the human self. Someone may tempt you, saying: *"Look! A beautiful woman dancing, uncovered,"* and you lean towards her, your desires push you towards her. When someone comes to remind you and try to pull you away, it becomes difficult to listen, and even harder to resist your own self.

The callers to evil don't have to work hard; they put little effort. The burden falls on those who call to goodness. The one inviting to evil offers everything the soul craves, exposed bodies, forbidden desires, pleasures for the eyes and ears, and delight for the heart and body. But the one calling to righteousness offers only restraint, and that is heavy on the soul.

Don't be surprised by this description of religion as "heavy," for God Himself called it so in the Quran

"We shall send a momentous message down to you"
Quran (73:5)

Every noble pursuit weighs heavily on the soul. For a student, giving up friends and play to focus on studying is heavy. For a scholar, leaving gatherings of leisure to immerse in reading and teaching is heavy. For the one asleep in a warm bed, rising for the dawn prayer is heavy.

That's why the heedless are many.

"If you obeyed most of those on earth, they would lead you away from the path of God. They follow nothing but speculation; they are merely guessing"
Quran (6:116)

Indeed, the prophets and the righteous scholars who inherit their mission are the ones who remind us and guide us to the path of Paradise. As for the corrupters, they lead others down the road to Hell.

This does not mean that a believer never sins. Islam is the religion of human nature. The reality is that God created a being devoted entirely to obedience and pure worship, the angels. But He did not make us angels. He also created beings given wholly to disobedience and disbelief, the devils. Yet He did not make us like the devils either.

The truth about humans is that we possess the potential for both good and evil. God has given us both paths and endowed us with reason to distinguish between them, along with willpower and faith to choose one over the other. If you use your reason well to distinguish right from wrong, and exercise willpower to act upon what is right, you will attain God's help and will be able to nurture your capacity for goodness until it becomes part of your character. Eventually in the Hereafter, you will be among the blessed. However, choosing the other path will result in penalty.

It's true that the human self doesn't like rules or limits that religion imposes, but such restraint is necessary. The one who lives with absolute freedom lives in madness. A rational person, on the other hand, allows reason to place limits on his freedom.

And what is reason? It is a kind of restraint. The very word in Arabic is derived from the same root as "*iqal"* the rope used to tether a camel. Similarly, the word *ḥikmah* (wisdom) is closely related in meaning to the bit used to guide an animal which is a form of control.

Even civilization is a form of restraint: it doesn't allow you to act however you please. It demands that you consider the rights of others and observe the norms of society. Justice is also a restraint, for it limits your freedom at the point where your neighbor's freedom begins.

Sins are pleasurable, precisely because they align with the desires of the self. There is a certain satisfaction in listening to gossip or taking part in it, it gives you a sense of superiority over the one being talked about, as if you are somehow better than them. Theft brings a thrill because it means acquiring wealth without effort. Adultery is tempting because it gratifies the passion and fulfills a craving. Cheating on an exam feels rewarding, because it leads to success without the struggle.

But when a person pauses to reflect, when they truly use their reason, they realize that this temporary freedom is not worth the long imprisonment that follows in the Hellfire. And that forbidden pleasure is nothing compared to the suffering that comes after.

The Truth

We all forget about death. We see the dead passing before us every day, yet we rarely imagine that we too someday will die. We stand in funeral prayers, but our minds are occupied with the affairs of this world. Each of us behaves as though death was destined for everyone except ourselves. And yet we all know that this world has an end. No matter how long a person lives, he/she will die. Let him live sixty years, seventy, even a hundred, will it not come to an end?

If death is inevitable, why don't we think about it and prepare for it? If someone knows he has a journey ahead, even if he doesn't know exactly when it will begin, wouldn't he get ready, so he's prepared when the call comes?

But what is death?

A human life has stages.

- The first is the womb, when we are unborn.
- The second is life in this world.
- The third is the barzakh (the in, between realm from death until the Day of Resurrection).
- And the final, eternal stage, the real life is the life of the Hereafter.

Each stage is related to the one before it as the next chapter is to the previous. The vastness of this world compared to the narrowness of the womb is like the vastness of the barzakh compared to this life, and the vastness of the Hereafter compared to the barzakh.

A fetus imagines the womb to be the entire world. If it were conscious, if it could think and speak, it would surely say that leaving the womb is certain death. But that departure is a new birth into a wider and longer stage of life.

That is what death is, a new birth, an exit to a greater and more enduring phase. This world is only a passageway. Our life in it is like a traveler in a ship. He might choose his cabin on the ship carefully and ensure it's comfortable. But would he spend all his money decorating the room, upgrading the furniture, and painting the walls only to arrive with nothing left? Or would he say, "I'm only in this cabin for a week. I'll deal with what's available and save my resources to build the home I'll live in once I arrive"?

This is the essence of the matter. But that doesn't mean Islam calls for complete renunciation of the world, as if one must abandon it entirely, shut the door on it, live in mosques without stepping out, or retreat to a cave for the rest of one's life.

No, Islam calls on Muslims to build a civilization, to earn wealth in a lawful manner, to be the most knowledgeable in every field of knowledge, and the wisest of scholars. To enjoy the good things in life so long as they are permissible.

A Muslim should understand the rights of his body, to nourish it, to keep it active and strong. He should recognize the rights of his soul, for wholesome recreation and enjoyment that is free from sin.

He must honor the rights of his family, offering them care and companionship; the rights of his children, through guidance, education, and compassion; and the rights of society, by working for its betterment. And above all, he must fulfill the rights of God through truly believing in His Oneness and obeying.

The ultimate aim is to seek the pleasure of God.

Part 2 | Key Terms & Definitions

Doubt, Assumption and Certainty

Before talking about **creed (Aqidah)**, I find it necessary to clarify a few key terms that frequently appear in scholarly discussions and books on theology.
These terms are

- **Speculation (or doubt)**
- **Assumption**
- **Certainty**

Clarifying them will allow us to arrive at a better definition of what constitutes a creed.

René Descartes, in his famous philosophical method and before him, A**l-Ghazālī**[6] in his book "*Rescuer from Misguidance* , A*l-Munqidh min Al-Dalal". B*oth began with doubt as a path to certainty. Descartes' doubt was not an end but a means to test and confirm truth. So, what exactly is **doubt**?

Let's take an example. Suppose you are in Mecca, and someone asks you, "Is it raining in Madinah right now?" You cannot answer with a definitive "yes," nor can you confidently say "no." It's entirely possible that it is raining in Madinah at that moment, but it is just as possible that the skies are clear and dry. Let's say there's a 50% chance of rain and a 50% chance of no rain. Both possibilities are equally plausible, with no evidence to favor one over the other. This state of balance, where neither side is supported by proof is what we call **doubt**.

Now, imagine you look to the direction of Madinah and you see clouds forming on the horizon. This slight indication tips the scale a little in favor of the likelihood that it

[6] https://www.ghazali.org/

is indeed raining there. This gentle leaning toward one side is what scholars call **assumption (الظن).**

In this case, you might say: “I *think* it’s raining in Madinah.”
Here, the probability of rain may now feel like 60%, while the chance of no rain drops to 40%.

Now, if you observe the clouds thickening, darkening, and piling up, lightning flashing through them, and your belief in the likelihood of rain in Madinah increases, you might now estimate the chance of rain to be 70% or even 75%. This increased level of probability is what our scholars refer to as **predominant assumption** (غلبة الظن). At this stage, you would say, “I strongly believe it is raining in Madinah”.

But if you then travel to Madinah and see the rain with your own eyes, feel it on your skin, and witness it directly, you are no longer relying on assumptions or probability you now have **certainty**. This is what scholars call **knowledge** (*ilm*) in the fullest sense.

The term **knowledge** (*ilm*) itself can carry several meanings:

- It can mean **absolute knowledge**, which is the opposite of ignorance.
- It can also refer to **science**, in contrast with art or philosophy. For instance, chemistry and physics are considered sciences, whereas painting and poetry are classified as art.

In this second definition, science seeks truth via the use of reason, employing methods such as logical reasoning, experimentation, and inductive inference. Art, on the other hand, seeks beauty, is motivated by emotion, and is conveyed through aesthetic preference.

However, the specific meaning of **knowledge** that we are concerned with in the books as we proceed is the third one

- **Certainty**, as opposed to **doubt** or **speculation.**

Self, Evident Truths and Belief

Among the types of theoretical knowledge are those that, in principle, require evidence and cannot be obtained from direct sensory awareness. However, such knowledge becomes so prevalent and well, known that it is comprehended by both the learned and the ignorant, the young and the elderly, to the point where it is practically indistinguishable from current knowledge.

Consider the phrase "a part is smaller than the whole": a portion of bread is smaller than the complete loaf. This is a truth that initially belonged to the realm of theoretical knowledge, and it would, in principle, require evidence. However, no one questions it or wants proof of it. Even a child will prefer to take a whole handful of

chocolate in exchange for a lesser handful. And if you try to convince him that the smaller handful is larger, he will not believe you. This is because the concept that a part is smaller than the whole has become self, evident.

Self, evident truths are those intellectual facts that are universally accepted by people and for which no one seeks proof. When such a truth settles into the subconscious mind, influences intuition and emotion, and begins to shape a person's conscious thinking and actions, it becomes what we call a *belief*, and holding such a belief is called *faith*.

However, we know that humans do not always believe in the truth; they might be equally committed to falsehoods. Even today, we witness followers of wrong ideologies and false doctrines who fully embrace them, mind, body, and soul. They hold to these ideals both visibly and inwardly, and they are willing to give up their money and lives to defend them. Should we call these folks believers?

Not in the absolute sense. The Quran describes such a phenomena

"Do you not see how those given a share of the Scripture, [evidently] now believe in idols and evil powers?"
Quran (4:51)

"most of them will only believe in God while also joining others with Him."
Quran (12:106)

However, *faith,* the meaning that is consistently intended whenever the word appears in the Quran, the Sunnah, or described by the scholars is defined as:

- Belief in God as the one and only Lord,
- The sovereign, who acts of His own will,
- The only deity, worshipped alone, without partner in anything that falls under the category of worship,
- And believe in everything revealed to His Prophet: including the angels, the messengers, the Last Day, and destiny, both its good and its evil.

Whoever holds this belief is a believer. However, if someone rejects any portion of it, doubts it, or hesitates to acknowledge it, they lose their faith and are no longer considered believers.

Part 3 | Knowledge & Certainty (Yaqeen)

Principles of Belief

The First Principle

"**I** do not doubt the existence of what I perceive with my senses."

Although this is a self, evident intellectual fact, observation demonstrates otherwise. I might be wandering through the desert at midday and notice what looks to be a pool of water in the distance. But when I arrive, I find only dry land, the water was a mirage. Alternatively, I may place a straight pen in a glass of water and observe that it appears bent despite remaining straight.

This demonstrates how the senses can mislead and deceive. Does that imply that I should doubt the existence of what I perceive? No. If I questioned everything I saw, heard, or felt, the distinction between reality and illusion would become blurred. Facts and fantasy would become indistinguishable.

To preserve this principle, however, I must add a condition: Certainty about the existence of what I sense requires that my reason to affirm the validity of the perception, especially through repeated experience.

With experience, the mind learns to recognize when the senses are misleading. The first time I see a mirage, I may believe it is water. But when I encounter the same phenomenon again, I recognize it as a mirage. Similarly, after seeing the pen appear bent in water, I understand from prior knowledge that it remains straight despite the optical distortion.

The instances in which the senses err or deceive are few, limited, and well,

known. And reason, guided by experience, learns to distinguish between true

perception and illusion.

The Second Principle

"**Certainty**, just as it comes through sense and direct observation, also comes through a sound report when we believe the one who conveys it is truthful."

There are many things we have neither seen nor perceived directly, yet we are just as certain of their existence as we are of what we see and sense ourselves. We are certain, for example, of the existence of India and Brazil, though most of us have never visited them or seen them with our own eyes. We are certain that Alexander the Great conquered Persia, and that Al, Walid ibn Abd al, Malik built the Umayyad Mosque despite not having witnessed Alexander's battles or the construction of the mosque.

If each of us were to reflect honestly, we would discover that the things we know exist despite never having seen them firsthand are far more than those we have personally encountered.

So how do we come to such certainty about things we haven't experienced ourselves?

We believe in them because they were reported by so many people that it becomes impossible, as a matter of common human behavior, that they could have conspired to fabricate such accounts and transmit them.

The Third Principle

"**We** have no right to deny the existence of things, merely because we cannot perceive them with our senses."

To what extent can our senses access knowledge? Are they capable of perceiving all that exists?

The relationship between the senses and the realities of existence is like that of a person confined inside a fortress, where all the doors and windows have been sealed, except for a few narrow slits in the wall: one looking out onto a river in the east, one facing a mountain in the west, another toward a palace in the north, and one more toward a playground in the south.

The fortress is the body, and those slits are our senses. The sense of sight peers into the world of colors, hearing into the world of sounds, taste into the world of flavors, smell into the world of scents, and touch into the world of physical forms.

But here is the question: Does each of these senses perceive everything within the realm it observes? When one looks through the slit facing the river, he does not see the entire river, only a portion of it. Likewise, the eye, when gazing into the realm of color, does not perceive all of it, only some.

I cannot see an ant walking three miles away, even though it exists. I cannot see the bacteria or microbes swimming in a clear glass of water, even though that glass may contain millions of them. That ant may even make a sound, but I cannot hear it, because my ears can only detect vibrations within a specific range, roughly from 5,000 to 20,000 Hz. Sounds below or above that threshold are either imperceptible or would rupture the eardrum.

I cannot smell sugar, even though ants and flies do, and are quickly drawn to it. The senses, then, can only perceive a fraction of the realities they interact with.

Furthermore, could there not be realms of existence between the worlds of color and sound that I am unable to see due to a lack of the necessary senses? Couldn't there be a large hidden garden between the river and the mountain near the tower

because there is no slit facing it? Is it fair to reject its existence simply because I can't see it?

A person born blind may come to understand, by listening, that the sea is blue and the meadow is green. But he does not truly know what blue or green is. So, is it right for him to deny the existence of color simply because he cannot perceive it?

There are many realities in existence that fall completely outside the scope of the senses. Should I deny their existence simply because my limited senses don't have access to them?

The Fourth Principle

"**The** human imagination can grasp only what the senses have perceived."

We've already mentioned that the senses are limited in extent. I can't see everything that the eye can. This is correct. But God has given us an ability that compensates for this limitation: imagination. Though I cannot physically see my Damascus home while in Mecca, I can vividly visualize it as if I were there. Imagination thus complements the senses.

But is imagination limitless or subject to limitations? Can I envision something that my senses have never seen?

According to psychologists, imagination is of two types.
The first is referential imagination, such as when I imagine my house in Damascus while I am away from it in Mecca. The second is creative imagination, this is the realm of poets, storytellers, painters, and artists of all kinds.

However, look at the work of these artists, do they truly create anything outside the realms of reality? Consider the sculptor who created the Venus statue. He created a completely unique form. But was it really new? No, he combined the most stunning nose, charming mouth, and elegant body he had ever seen. The result was a "new" invention, although it was made up of already existing shards from reality.

The same goes for poets, no matter how far they delve into metaphor, allegory, or extravagant exaggeration, their work remains a composite of elements taken from the real world.

This is why Ibn Abbas said:

"Nothing in this world resembles what is in the Hereafter, except the names."
The wine of Paradise is not like earthly wine. The Fire of Hell is not like any fire we know. The bridge stretched over Hell is not like the bridges that span our rivers and valleys.

The Fifth Principle

“**For** the mind judges only within the limits of time and space. As for matters beyond them such as the soul, destiny, and the traits and attributes of God, the mind has no ability to fully comprehend them.”

When the sight sees a straight stick seem bent in a glass of water, the intellect is not tricked; it understands the stick is straight. Similarly, when the eye sees what appears to be water in the desert, the brain recognizes it as a mirage; it is sand, not water. Thus, the intellect makes more precise judgments than the senses and can distinguish farther. But can it judge everything? Is its reach infinite?

The intellect cannot perceive or comprehend anything until it is positioned within two dimensions: time and space. Without these constraints, the intellect cannot perceive it. Imagine that a geography instructor said: "There is a town that is not in a plain, nor on a mountain; not on land, nor in the sea; not on the earth, nor in the sky; not in any known location, but it exists." Your intellect would be unable to comprehend, believe, or accept it. The intellect can only make decisions within the boundaries of time and space.

So everything beyond our understanding of time and space, such as the nature of the soul or the existence of God, is beyond the ability of our comprehension. Furthermore, the brain is limited; it cannot assess or embrace the limitless.

Take, for example, the eternal life of the believers in Paradise. A believer is certain of its reality, this certainty reached us through sound and authentic revelation. But try to understand eternity using your intellect. Reflect upon it: you may picture them dwelling in Paradise for a century, then two, then a hundred centuries, then a million, then a billion. Eventually, your intellect hits a wall. It asks, “And then what?” It seeks an end, because it cannot conceive of a true infinity. If you attempt to imagine reaching infinity, your intellect collapses into contradiction, an outcome it itself deems invalid.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote a famous treatise affirming that the intellect is only capable of judging within the domain of the material world. Yet what Kant declared, our own scholars had affirmed centuries earlier, repeated it, and established it to the point that it became an almost self, evident axiom, scarcely worth repeating. Thus, the intellect's judgments are valid only in finite, material matters.

This very principle, which Kant demonstrated in his book, was already recorded by our scholars long before, such as Maqsad Al-Asna by Imam Al-Ghazali.

The Sixth Principle

" **The** instinct to Seek refuge in a power beyond created beings."

All people, believers and non-believers alike, when struck by a calamity with no apparent escape, do not turn to the creatures around them for help. Instead, they instinctively reach out to a power beyond this world, a force they cannot see, but deeply felt in their souls and hearts. This is commonly observed in those suffering from severe illness, when pain intensifies and doctors are helpless. In such moments, everyone naturally turns to their Creator.

Have you ever asked yourself: Why does this happen? Why is it that, in moments of great distress, people instinctively return to God?

I once read an article, a translated selection from Reader's Digest, written during WWII by a young paratrooper. At the time, parachuting was an unfamiliar and terrifying experience. He described his first jump: reared in a household without any mention of God or prayer, educated in secular schools with no religious instruction or faith-based teachers, he grew up in a fully worldly, irreligious atmosphere. However, as he dropped through the air and found himself hanging in the nothingness before his parachute deployed, he immediately shouted out, "O God, O Lord!" praying from the bottom of his heart. He was astounded: where did this faith come from?

Even Stalin's daughter, in her recently published memoirs, describes how she returned to religion after growing up immersed in atheism. She, too, marvels at her own spiritual reawakening. But in truth, there is nothing surprising about it. Belief in a Creator is innate, a deeply rooted instinct within the human soul, just as natural as the instinct of desire.

However, this natural instinct can be covered over by passions, ambitions, material cravings, and worldly distractions. Yet when fear, danger, or hardship shake a person to the core, these veils fall away, and that innate belief re-emerges.

The renowned French sociologist Émile Durkheim wrote in one of his works that faith in a divine being is a self, evident truth, a natural human necessity. He argued that no person can truly live and die without once contemplating the existence of a Creator. The mind may fall short in recognizing the true object of worship, leading some to venerate things mistakenly believed to be divine, or thought to bring them closer to God. Yet, in moments of genuine crisis and existential threat, all of these imagined deities are cast aside, and people turn instinctively to God alone.

The Seventh Principle

*" **Man** perceives by intuition that this material world is not everything, and that an invisible spiritual realm exists beyond it."*

Humans possess a deep, intuitive awareness that this material life is not everything. This insight comes from observing the limitations of material pleasures. Once these pleasures reach their peak and fulfill their purpose, they no longer bring true delight; instead, they become mere habits, losing their flavor and appeal.

The sick person longs for relief and recovery, imagining that all pleasure lies in the absence of pain. Yet once health returns and the days of illness are forgotten, health itself no longer seems a source of joy. The young person yearns for fame, delighting when the radio broadcasts their name or newspapers print their picture. But when fame comes, filling ears and eyes with their presence, it becomes an ordinary matter, no longer thrilling.

The soul recognizes that material pleasures are limited, whereas spiritual delights are vastly greater and more deeply established inside the human self.

The Eighth Principle

*"**Belief** in the existence of the hereafter as a Necessary Consequence of Belief in God."*

Belief in the afterlife inevitably follows from belief in God. This is because God is necessarily just, and justice cannot tolerate oppression. A just God will not allow the oppressor to go unpunished, nor leave the oppressed without recompense. Yet in this life, we witness many who live as oppressors and die unpunished, and others who suffer injustice and pass away without being vindicated. What, then, is the meaning of this? How can this be, if God exists and if God is truly just?

The answer is that there must be another life beyond this one, an afterlife where the righteous are rewarded and the wrongdoers face justice.

The story of injustice does not end with the conclusion of this world. Imagine if a film were abruptly cut in the middle and the audience was told, "It's over." No viewer would believe the story had ended; they would naturally wonder about the rest of the plot. They expect the author to complete the story and settle the accounts of the characters. Since the author is human, how much less reasonable is it to believe that the story of life ends with death, before the final reckoning has taken place?

From this, reason concludes that the universe must have a Creator, and that beyond this transient life lies another realm. This unknown world is not Plato's world of ideal forms, a mere philosophical concept, but rather the reality of the Hereafter, created by the Creator beyond imagination.

Moreover, the greatest pleasures of this world, the joy of union and connection, last but a fleeting moment, often not more than half a minute. This shows us that these pleasures are only glimpses, reflections of the deeper, eternal delights of the afterlife. They are like a sample of food tasted before purchase; if you enjoy the sample, you then desire the full portion.

Belief in the Unseen

The Unseen

As we mentioned in the last chapter, the senses are restricted and cannot detect or reach everything that exists. There are real realms in existence that lie beyond the reach of our sensory perception. The closest of these to us is the **soul**, the very element that gives each of us life. The visible, perceptible domain is what the Quran refers to as the **"visible world"** (*Alam al-shahada*), while the hidden realm beyond matter, the metaphysical, is known as the **"world of the unseen"** (Alam *al-Ghaib*).

As for the visible world, belief in it is shared equally by all people, regardless of faith or background, because it is part of what is known through **immediate and self, evident knowledge**. There is no merit in believing what is plainly visible to all. True virtue lies in **believing in the unseen**, in accepting and affirming the existence of realities not directly experienced, relying instead on the **trustworthiness of the one who conveyed that knowledge**. This is the distinguishing trait of the righteous, which is why the first attribute God ascribes to them in the opening verses of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* is:

"Those who believe in the unseen..." *Quran (2:3)*

The Unseen, Why

But how can we believe in the unseen when God has not given us senses with which to perceive it? If we were left to our senses alone, or if our intellects were confined to judging only what the senses revealed, we would remain ignorant of all that exists beyond the material world.

And so, in His wisdom and mercy, God **informed us** of what we need to know about the unseen, not through inward intuition, spiritual inspiration, or rational deduction, but through **revelation**. This revelation does not originate from within

the self; it is not a product of human capacity. Rather, it comes from outside the human sphere entirely.

The most common and comprehensive way God conveys such knowledge is by sending **one of His noble unseen beings, angels, to one of His chosen human messengers**, conveying to them His words and commanding them to deliver His message to humankind.

"It is not for any human being that God should speak to him, except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to reveal, by His permission, whatever He wills."
Quran (42:51)

If we accept reports from trustworthy sources in everyday life, about people, places, or events we haven't witnessed, how much more should we trust the report of a prophet whose truthfulness has been established beyond doubt?

Since the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ truthfully conveyed knowledge from God, and this knowledge has been reliably transmitted to us, we, believers, hold with certainty that these unseen realities exist. Thus, belief in the unseen is not blind faith; it is a rational conviction grounded in the credibility of the one who delivered the message, and in the truth of the message itself.

Categories of the Unseen

1. **Historic Events**
   This relates to events that we did not witness but which others witnessed or experienced. The Quran refers to the story of Prophet Joseph (Yusuf) as "unseen" since Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his people were unaware of it. However, the Children of Israel, including Joseph's brothers, experienced it. It was part of their everyday reality.

2. **Not Witnessed by Most Humans, Though Rationally Knowable**
   These are events that no human has witnessed, though in theory, they could have, had their existence preceded those events. This includes happenings on Earth before the emergence of humankind, the lives of creatures that once inhabited it, the creation of Adam, the first human, and the beginning of human life.

3. **Absolutely Beyond Human Perception or Comprehension**
   This is the highest degree of the unseen. It includes matters that can neither be sensed, imagined, nor comprehended by reason. Examples include the attributes of God, the nature of angels, the events of the Day of Judgment, and the nature of reward and punishment in the afterlife. These are truths entirely hidden from the faculties of human perception and understanding.

Part 4 | Articles of Faith (Iman)

The Creator (God, Allah)

Belief in God includes four key tenets:

1. That God exists, without having been created.
2. That He is the Lord of all worlds.
3. That He is the sovereign ruler of the universe, who governs all things.
4. That He alone is worthy of worship, and no one else is to be worshipped alongside Him

The Existence of God

As stated in the sixth principle, belief in the existence of God is a self-evident truth, grasped intuitively, even before the mind seeks rational proof. It does not require argument, though the evidence supports it from all sides. I will not attempt to compile or exhaust these proofs, as they are just too many.

Anyone who has read *"God being Manifested in the Age of Science"*, a collection of reflections by thirty leading scientists in physics and astronomy, or *"Science Speaks of Faith"*, will find powerful testimonies. These books gather the insights of distinguished thinkers such as Frank Allen, who argued that the notion of an eternal universe, long held by Greek philosophers, is scientifically untenable. Modern science has shown that everything has an origin, a beginning, which invalidates the idea of a world without a starting point. Frank Allen, notably, was one of the foremost experts in biology. Likewise, the radar pioneer Robert Morris Page, the chemist John Cleveland Cothran, and the physicist John Herbert Blond have all contributed valuable insights into this discourse. I encourage readers to explore these and similar works, there are many of them.

Personally, I have no desire to repeat the classic proofs offered by theologians, nor even the modern ones presented by scientists. Instead, I wish to point to just one argument found in the Quran, a proof that is clear, decisive, and universally accessible. It is understood by the layperson and profoundly moves the scholar. God draws our attention, in a single verse, to the greatest proof of all, it is “ourselves”.

“And in your own selves, do you not see?” Quran (51:21)

We turn to God in times of distress, guided by our natural and innate faith, our instinct for the divine. We see the signs of His existence in our own being and in the universe around us. Our subconscious affirms His existence intuitively, while our conscious mind confirms it through reason.

How, then, can anyone deny God, when he himself is the very proof of God’s existence? It is as if someone is soaked through, dripping with water, and yet insists he has not been near it. But why do so many people fail to realize it?

The answer lies in forgetfulness.

"They forgot God, so He made them forget themselves." Quran (59:19)

Observe how many people simply eat, sleep, rise, and repeat. They seek pleasure and avoid pain, chasing after worldly gain for themselves, their families, and loved ones. They wake up, groom themselves, get dressed, eat breakfast, and head to work, all in pursuit of money and profit. They return home to eat and rest, then either go back to work or look for entertainment, anything to fill the void, to kill time, until hunger calls again or sleep overtakes them.

Then they start a new day, repeating the same routine. And so many people go through life on autopilot, never pausing to ask the most important question
What is all this for? And Who am I, really?

The Muslim's Perspective on Life

Unlike others who may be content with eating, drinking, working, and seeking leisure, the Muslim ideally seeks a deeper understanding of life. He asks himself where he came from. Where am I heading? Where did I come from? What is my end destination?

He reflects and realizes that life does not begin with birth and end with death. He was once a fetus in his mother's womb. How could he possibly have brought himself into existence through his own mind and will, when he existed *before* he even had a mind or a will?

None of us remembers our early childhood, not even our own birth. Who remembers being born? Who recalls their time in the womb? And if we existed before we were conscious of existing, how could we claim that we brought ourselves into being?

Ask the atheist, if you ever meet one:
Did you create yourself through your own will and intellect?
Were you the one who placed yourself in your mother's womb?
Did you choose her to be your mother?

If not, did you come into existence from nothing, without a cause or a creator? That is impossible.

So, did the existing objects around you, such as mountains, seas, the sun, and planets, bring you into being? They simply lack consciousness and will. Could such things produce a rational, conscious being?

When René Descartes put his method of radical doubt to the test, questioning everything, he arrived at one undeniable truth: himself. He could not doubt his own existence, because he was the one doing the doubting. And so he declared his famous statement: *"I think, therefore I am."*

His existence was beyond doubt, but who brought him into existence? Could these inanimate material things have done it? Certainly not.

Wonder

I did not create myself, nor did I emerge from nothing. That leaves only one possible explanation, the only one that holds true. Everything else is false:
Behind all this lifeless matter is a mighty, all, powerful God who brought everything into existence, He created me, the world, and all that is in it.

This is the very argument the Quran presents in a single, piercing verse:
“Were they created without any agent? Were they the creators?”
Quran (52:35)

Some claim that "nature" created mankind, that it is nature which gifted humans with intelligence. I remember how, as children during and after World War I, we had teachers who told us such things. These were teachers who followed blindly the "new civilization" drifting in first from Istanbul, then from Paris. They considered themselves enlightened for repeating what they heard there. And back then, the term "enlightened" was equivalent to the term "progressive" today.

We grew older and began to ask: *What exactly is this “nature”?*

They said: “Nature is chance… the law of probability.”

Then I asked: “Do you know what that sounds like?”

Imagine two men lost their way in the desert. They come across a palace, its walls are decorated with fine engravings, floors covered with luxurious carpets, elegant clocks on the walls, and chandeliers hang from the ceiling.

The first says, “Surely, a man built this palace and furnished it.”

The second replies, “You are backward and naïve. This is the work of nature!”

“How so?” the first asks.

The second explains, “There were some stones lying here. Over time, with floods, winds, and the forces of erosion, they piled up by coincidence and, over centuries, formed these walls.”

“And the carpets?”

“Wool from stray sheep floated through the air, mixed together, became dyed with colorful minerals, and, over centuries, wove themselves into carpets.”

“And the clocks?”

“Bits of iron rusted and broke apart due to natural forces, then randomly came together into circles and gears, and after enough time, formed these timepieces!”

What would you call such a person?!

Can “coincidence” explain how a single liver cell, visible only under a microscope, carries out complex biochemical tasks that would require entire laboratories of equipment, and even then, only partially?

Did “chance” place **9,000 taste buds** on the tongue, each precisely suited for tasting?
Did coincidence arrange for **100,000 hearing cells** in each ear?
Or for **130 million light, sensitive cells** in each eye?

Consider the earth with its minerals and secrets, its diverse plants and animals, vast deserts, deep oceans, towering mountains, and winding valleys.
Now compare the Earth to the **Sun**, and suddenly it seems small and insignificant. The Sun is over a **million times** larger than the Earth.

Even the Sun, massive as it is, is like a grain of sand compared to some of the planets and stars beyond.

The Sun, which is more than 100 million kilometers away, sends light to Earth in eight minutes at a speed of 300 thousand kilometers per second.

What about stars whose light takes **a million years** to reach us?

And all of this, this exquisite order, complexity, and majestic grandeur, is said to be the result of mere "coincidence"?

That is not reason. That is denial.

God, the Lord of All Worlds

This is the second foundation in the belief in God, to firmly hold that God alone is the Creator of all these worlds, the world of animals, the world of plants, and the world of the heavens. The worlds visible to us, and those hidden from our senses, He brought them all into existence from nothing. He established for them these extraordinary laws, so precise and delicate, that we have barely begun to uncover their secrets in fields like chemistry, physics, medicine, and astronomy.

He is the Lord of all these worlds. He created them, sustains them, and transforms them from one state to another. In every particle, He has placed signs for those endowed with intellect, guiding and directing them.

This is the second essential tenet of faith in God. But is believing in this alone sufficient to be considered a true believer? If someone acknowledges that God is the Creator and the Lord, should we then simply regard them as a believer?

No. That alone is not enough. For many ancient peoples, such as the disbelievers of Quraysh whom Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent to challenge,

they too admitted God's existence when asked and did not deny it. Yet this did not make them true believers.

God, the Owner of the Universe

The third essential truth is that God is the absolute Owner of the universe, exercising complete authority over all that exists within it. He governs it like a sovereign ruler governs his kingdom. He gives life and causes death, can you prevent death from reaching yourself, or grant yourself eternal life in this world? He causes illness and grants healing, can you cure what He has doesn't will to be cured?

He bestows wealth and tests with poverty. He sends floods and brings drought. He grants some people daughters, other sons, and makes some infertile. Can those blessed with daughters turn them into boys?

All authority, control, and power over life, death, provision, and the fate of creation belong to God alone.

The One True God, the Only Deity Worthy of Worship

Most people acknowledge that He is the Sovereign Owner, the One who governs the universe. But is this acknowledgment alone enough to make one a true believer? No, it is not.

There is a fourth essential matter: the confession that He alone is the One God worthy of worship. If you accept that God exists, that He is the Lord of all worlds, and that He owns all dominion, then you must worship none besides Him. You must not associate any partner with Him in any form of worship. True faith requires exclusive devotion to Him alone.

Worshiping God

Believing that God is the Lord of all worlds and the Owner of the universe is a matter of the heart , a conviction one holds internally. However, faith in God as the **One True Deity** goes beyond mere belief; it extends into behavior and action. It requires engaging in worship devoted only to Him. If someone refuses to worship God alone or associates others with Him in worship, then despite sincerely believing that God is the Lord and Owner of all creation, that person is not truly a believer.

What is worship?

The first things that come to mind are remembrance (dhikr), prayer, fasting, reciting the Quran, and other acts that bring one closer to God, and indeed, these are acts of worship. But worship is not limited to these rituals alone. Every beneficial action that is permitted, when performed by a believer seeking God's reward, becomes an act of worship.

Eating, for example, when done to strengthen oneself to obey God, is considered an act of worship. Marriage, when done to preserve one's chastity and fulfill God's commands, is worship. Earning a living with pure intentions, spending on one's

family, acquiring knowledge and qualifications, a woman managing her household, serving her family, caring for her children, all these, when done with the intention of pleasing God, are acts of worship.

In fact, worship is a broad concept that encompasses all the beneficial actions a person undertakes with the sincere purpose of earning God's pleasure.

Perhaps this is the meaning intended in God's words:
"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me." (Quran 51:56)

The Foundation of Worshiping God

God alone is the One who benefits and harms, meaning:
In this universe, some things harm us and others benefit us, and benefit and harm occur in two ways:

- Some have obvious causes, explained by natural laws we understand and study, like poison causing a heart to stop.
- Others occur without an apparent cause or known law, like a sudden heart attack in a healthy person, for reasons unknown to us.

Howver, God has created humans with an instinct to seek what benefits them, using all possible means. He also made humans naturally averse to harm and striving to avoid it. People seek help through every possible way, which some are permitted, and some forbidden.

What then is legitimate assistance, and what is forbidden?

- If your child is sick, and a doctor is nearby listening to your prayers, examining the illness, and prescribing medicine, this is lawful assistance. You are seeking healing through the natural law established by God and through a knowledgeable person familiar with that law.
- But if you call upon a charlatan or sorcerer to heal without science or natural law, relying on supposed supernatural powers that have no empirical or revealed evidence, that is forbidden assistance.
- Visiting the grave of a deceased doctor and asking for healing is forbidden, as the dead cannot examine or treat the patient.
- If medicine fails and science cannot cure, turning to prayer, charity, or asking a righteous person to pray for healing is legitimate assistance.
- But seeking help from the grave of a righteous person, expecting him to intercede or heal without power, is forbidden.

Thus, it becomes clear that seeking help through the laws of nature and turning to knowledgeable people, using customary means to gain benefit, is lawful and encouraged, while remembering that the true Benefactor is God alone. On the other hand, seeking assistance from supposed unseen powers unsupported by empirical

science or authentic revelation is forbidden and contradicts the doctrine of monotheism.

God alone has the authority to declare what is permissible (halal) and what is forbidden (haram)

The benefits we achieve through applying the laws of nature are worldly benefits, for God has given us the tools to uncover these laws within the realm of the material world and in this life. We have no power to bring benefit or harm to ourselves in the hereafter.

Since God has established the causes for the eternal benefit, namely, performing what is obligatory, and the causes for eternal harm, namely, committing what is forbidden, then the authority to declare what is permissible (halal) and what is forbidden (haram), along with the resulting rewards and punishments, belongs to God alone.

Nobody has the right to designate something halal or haram based on opinion. No one may impose an obligation that God has not prescribed or forbid something God has not forbidden.

The Love and Awe (Khashyah) of God

Humans love and hate, we enjoy good meals, beautiful scenery. The believer's love for God is different, it is absolute, unrestricted, and unlimited. What we love in this world, in truth, is given to us by God. He who brought it into existence, made it subject to us, and enabled us to benefit from.

Humans fear many things, could be a blazing fire, a predator, a deadly poison, an oppressor. But such fear is limited and conditional, it is simply a desire to avoid the harm inherent in the feared thing or resulting from it. Once the danger passes, the fear dissipates. However, awe (Khashyah) of God is different. It is a type of fear that is mixed with reverence, and awareness of greatness. It is not just being afraid of harm, but feeling humbled by recognizing the majesty, power, and perfection of the one feared, God.

Love for God means obeying Him, preferring His pleasure over the desires of the self and the whispers of Satan, and following the Messenger (peace be upon him) in what he brought:
"Say, 'If you love God, follow me, and God will love you and forgive you your sins; God is most forgiving, most merciful" *Quran (3:31)*
Following Him is the measure of love.

Fear of God is shown by avoiding His prohibitions and choosing the pleasure of reward in the Hereafter over the fleeting pleasure of sin in this life. True, complete obedience belongs solely to God, obedience in everything, in what we love and what

we dislike, in what we understand and what we do not. This obedience is the fruit of love for God and the proof of that love.

Faith and Action

True, complete faith reveals itself through the believer's actions and conduct; faith never separates from action. This is why God links faith with righteous deeds.

"*Successful indeed are the believers, those who are humble in their prayers, and who avoid vain talk, and who are active in giving zakah, and who guard their chastity, except with their spouses or those bondwomen in their possession, for then they are free from blame; but whoever seeks beyond that are transgressors, and those who faithfully observe their trusts and covenants, and those who carefully maintain their prayers…"*
Quran (23:1- 9)

"Righteousness is not in turning your faces towards the east or the west. Rather, the righteous are those who believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Books, and the prophets; who give charity out of their cherished wealth to relatives, orphans, the poor, needy travelers, beggars, and for freeing captives; who establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and keep the pledges they make; and who are patient in times of suffering, adversity, and in ˹the heat of˺ battle. It is they who are true ˹in faith˺, and it is they who are mindful of Allah"
Quran (2:177)

Faith and action are inseparable; sincere belief naturally leads to good deeds and unwavering commitment.

The Angles

1. **Created before mankind**
   When God announced His intention to place a successor on earth, the angels said: *"Will You place therein one who will spread corruption and shed blood?"*

2. **Created for pure obedience**
   They are described as those who
   "who never disobey whatever Allah orders always doing as commanded"
   Quran (66:6)

3. **Their trial before Adam**
   When God completed the creation of Adam, He taught him the names and then tested the angels by asking them to name them. They could not answer until Adam informed them. Then God commanded the angles to honor Adam and bow to him, a bow of greeting not of worship.

4. **Taking human form**
   Angels can appear in human form.
   As the Quran describes
   "Then We sent to her Our angel appearing before her as a man, perfectly formed"
   Quran (19:17)

   Likewise, the guests of Abraham were angels who came as men. He prepared dinner for them, but when he saw their hands not reaching for it, he became suspicious. They reassured him
   "And when he saw that their hands did not reach for the food, he became suspicious and fearful of them. They reassured ˹him˺, "Do not be afraid! We are ˹angels˺ sent ˹only˺ against the people of Lot."
   Quran (11:70)

5. **Ranks and varieties**
   They differ in essence and in degree of devotion.
   God describes them *"Messengers with wings, two, three, or four. He increases in creation as He wills ... and there is none among us except that he has a known station."*
   a. Among them is Gabriel, who brings revelation: *"Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel, he it is who has brought it down upon your heart by God's leave ... it is indeed a revelation from the Lord of all worlds, brought down by the Trustworthy Spirit upon your heart, so that you may be among the warners."*
   b. Among them is the Angel of Death, entrusted with seizing souls: *"Say: The Angel of Death, who has been set over you, will take your souls."*
   c. And among them is the one who will blow the Trumpet to announce the final Hour.

Satan and His Deception

The Quran makes it clear that Iblīs (Satan), the father of daemons, was not of the angels but of the jinn. When God commanded the angels to prostrate to Adam, they all obeyed except Iblīs.

"And ˹remember˺ when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam," so they all did—but not Iblîs,[1] who was one of the jinn, but he rebelled against the command of his Lord."
Quran (18:50)

Unlike the angels, who never disobey God and do only as they are commanded, Iblīs chose defiance. He declared his superiority over Adam, saying:
"He replied, "I am better than he is: You created me from fire and him from clay."
Quran (38:76)

From that moment, he became the sworn enemy of humanity. He drove Adam and Eve out from Paradise, and ever since, his mission has been to keep their children from returning to it. His goal is to mislead people, to lure them from the guidance of the prophets into the darkness of error. God rebukes those who choose him over

their Creator
“Would you then take him and his descendants as patrons instead of Me, although they are your enemy? What an evil alternative for the wrongdoers ˹to choose˺!”
Quran (18:50)

However, Satan’s power is not absolute. God did not give him the ability to directly hurt or benefit humans, nor did He give him complete control over them.

His weapon is only *deception and cunning whispers*.

The Quran assures us:
“Indeed, Satan’s schemes are ever weak”
Quran (4:76)

His craft is to whisper doubts into hearts, and to adorn falsehood with the appearance of truth. He threatens people with poverty, stirs their greed, and calls them to immorality. His promises are nothing but illusions. He pushes them toward every form of corruption, for his entire program revolves around wickedness, indecency, and rebellion against God.

The first temptation of mankind reveals the core of his strategy. He deceived Adam and Eve by stripping away their garments, exposing their nakedness, and planting shame within them. Thus, the unveiling of modesty became his earliest weapon.

But despite his persistence and his unyielding hatred of mankind, Satan possesses no real power over the faithful. On the Day of Judgment, when the truth is clearly seen, he will remind his followers, confessing his weakness:

> *“And Satan will say ˹to his followers˺ after the judgment has been passed, “Indeed, Allah has made you a true promise. I too made you a promise, but I failed you. I did not have any authority over you. I only called you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; blame yourselves. I cannot save you, nor can you save me. Indeed, I denounce your previous association of me with Allah ˹in loyalty˺. Surely the wrongdoers will suffer a painful punishment.”*
> *Quran (14:22)*

Satan will continue to whisper and deceive, while those who follow God's guidance will be protected from Satan’s plan.

The Prophets

All Messengers Are Human

The Quran makes it clear that all messengers are humans, and servants of God. They possess no power to bring benefit or harm, to themselves or to others, except by God's permission.

They live and die just like everyone else. They fall ill and recover, just as ordinary people do. Their bodies are no different, their blood flows and their hearts beat like those of any other human being. They eat and drink as all people eat and drink. There is nothing divine about them, for divinity belongs to God alone. They are simply human beings who receive revelation.

The Prophet Muhammad

The Messenger is a human being distinguished by revelation. God said to Muhammad:
"Say, ˹O Prophet,˺ "I am only a man like you, ˹but˺ it has been revealed to me that your God is only One God. So whoever hopes for the meeting with their Lord, let them do good deeds and associate none in the worship of their Lord."
Quran (18:110)

Yet we are not like him in character, virtues, and greatness. Even if Muhammad had not been the Seal of the Prophets, he would still, beyond dispute, have stood as the greatest of the great and the noblest of heroes.

But since he is a human like us, subject to what we are subject to, one may ask

does he make mistakes as we do?

1. **In matters of revelation and the conveyance of God's message, error is impossible.**
When a messenger conveys and explains God's word, he does not speak from personal desire
"He does not speak from whim; it is only revelation revealed." God also declares: *"O mankind, the Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord."*
After being entrusted with the message, it is impossible for a prophet to sin, act unjustly, or do anything that might compromise his integrity or undermine his role as a moral role model.
God made him a model to be followed and commanded the believers to take him as an example
"Indeed, in the Messenger of God you have an excellent example."
Quran (33:21)

This principle of moral integrity applies to all prophets:

"Indeed, there is for you in them an excellent example."
Quran (60:6)
Such a role requires protection against sin and behaviors that contradict virtue.

2. **In matters of independent judgment where no revelation has yet been given, a prophet may error.**
   But God does not leave such errors uncorrected. He reveals to them the right course. This occurred with the Prophet in the case of the blind man, and in the matter of the captives at Badr. He exercised his own judgment, and then God clarified to him that his judgment was not the best choice. I have often reflected on the Prophet's response to the blind man, and I asked myself: had God not revealed the verses in *"He frowned and turned away,"* and had this incident been presented to the wise and the powerful of the world, would any of them have found fault in the Prophet's conduct? Or would they not all have agreed that what he did was entirely reasonable? He was speaking to leaders of the Quraysh, trying to win them over for the sake of the new faith, when a follower came with a question, one that was not urgent and could have been asked at any time. He postponed answering until he finished his discussion.
   Who among us would have acted differently? According to human reason, what he did was perfectly correct. But when the revelation came, judged by God's measure, it became clear that His standard is higher than ours, and His wisdom surpasses human wisdom.

3. **In administrative and military matters, the Prophet might also error.**
   In such cases, he exercised human judgment, and his companions would ask him whether a decision was by revelation or by opinion. If it was not from God, they would offer their own counsel, which he might adopt.
   This happened at the battle of Badr when he chose a place for the camp. His companions asked, "O Messenger of God, is this a position God commanded you to take, or is it personal strategy?" When he told them it was his own opinion, they suggested a different position, and he accepted it.

4. **In purely worldly matters, the Prophet gives an opinion, which could be incorrect.**
   This included practical matters of agriculture, trade, crafts, and medicine, fields best known to those who practice them. An example is his advice regarding the pollination of date palms, in which it wasn't right. But such an error carries no blame, for no one no matter how great is expected to master every trade, science, or craft. The pollination of date palms was a technical issue of agriculture. The Prophet offered a passing remark, never claiming it was revelation nor obliging people to follow it. When he realized the advice was not right, he said: *"You know best the affairs of your worldly life."*

He Does Not Know the Future

The Quran explicitly declares that the Messenger does not know the future. God commanded him to tell the people:

"Say, I do not claim to possess the treasures of God, nor do I know the unseen, nor do I say that I am an angel. I only follow what is revealed to me... Say, I have no power to bring benefit or harm to myself except as God wills. Had I known the unseen, I would have sought much good, and no harm would have touched me. I am only a warner and a bearer of glad tidings to people who believe."
Quran (11:31)

Miracles

When the Messenger of God ﷺ was taken on the Night Journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, traveling there and back in a single night, Quraysh could not believe it. To them it was impossible, for by the means they knew such a journey could never be made. Yet what was once thought impossible is today entirely ordinary: no one finds it strange that people can travel such distances in a matter of hours.

Had you told the greatest scientists only a century or two ago that people would fly in vessels of iron and steel, through the skies, they would have thought it impossible. Yet it has become possible.

How, then, does the impossible become reality? The answer is that there are two kinds of impossibility. The first is **customary impossibility**, things deemed impossible only because they contradict familiar experience, like the examples above. The second is **logical impossibility**, such as the coexistence of two opposites: existence and non, existence at the same time and place. It is inconceivable, for example, that a man should be present in a place at a given moment and absent from it at the same time. Logical impossibility can never occur.

But what is merely impossible according to habit may indeed occur. Human knowledge of the laws of nature has already transformed much of what was once "impossible" into daily reality. And if humans, with their limited understanding, can accomplish this, is it possible that the Creator of these laws is incapable of surpassing them? There is no doubt about His power. Hence, when a sound report (Hadith Sahih) reaches us of such an event, we accept it with certainty and conviction.

Many Messengers, One Message

The Quran makes it clear that every nation was sent a messenger from God
"There was never a nation without a warner having passed among them... For every nation there is a messenger."
Yet not all of them were named in the Quran. God says
"Some messengers We have already told you about, while others We have not told you."
Quran (40:78)

Though their names and circumstances differed, all were sent with the same call, to affirm God's oneness, to believe in the Day of Judgment, and to follow the way God prescribed.

The foundations of Islam are the very foundations of the earlier revelations brought by the first messengers:
"He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah, and that which We revealed to you, and what We enjoined upon Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: establish the religion and do not divide therein."
Quran (42:13)

Each messenger was sent to his own people, delivering the message in their own language so they could understand: *"We have never sent a messenger except in the language of his people, so that he may make things clear to them."*

These successive messages were concluded by the the mission of Muhammad ﷺ which was made universal for all humanity. He was declared the Seal of the Prophets, after whom no prophet would come, and no revelation would descend.

One might ask,
How can Muhammad's message be for all people, when every earlier messenger was sent only to his people? And how can it remain valid until the Day of Judgment, when earlier laws were replaced or modified?

The answer (and God knows best) is that the law of Islam was revealed with a unique flexibility, suited to every age and place. The evidence is this, matters of belief and worship in Islam are fixed, clear, and definitive texts that admit no alteration, for faith and worship do not change with time or differ by custom. But in matters of governance, financial dealings, and administrative affairs, areas shaped by the conditions of each age and the conventions of society, the Quran and Sunnah provided broad principles, like strong foundations upon which detailed structures can be built. Humanity was left free to legislate what is most suitable for each era, provided that the fundamental principles are followed.

A few examples may illustrate this: Islam commands that judgment among people must be based on justice, but it leaves to each generation the task of establishing the procedures that secure justice, how judges are appointed, how trials are conducted, and so forth. In contracts, it laid down fundamental rules ensuring the

capacity and freedom of the parties, the clarity of the terms, and the legitimacy of the subject matter, while forbidding forms of contract involving harm or deception. Beyond this, it left the detailed regulations of specific contracts to human discretion. In general, individual actions and financial transactions are deemed permissible unless a clear prohibition applies.

Moreover, Islam opened the door of *public-benefit* (*maslaha*). Any measure that benefits the community, and is not explicitly forbidden, is permissible. Such as financial regulations, procedural laws in the courts, or administrative systems like traffic laws and municipal governance.

This flexibility makes Islam applicable across all times and places. Yet, as Ibn al, Qayyim observed in "A*lTuruq AlHakimah"* book, some later jurists constrained by narrow minds, imposed needless restrictions on people where the law itself allowed wide scope, so much so that they drove people to seek relief outside what Islam had already provided.

Islam Makes No Distinction Between All Messengers

Among those who claim to follow the prophets, they honor who they follow while rejecting another. According to Islam, every believer must respect and believe in all the prophets. Speaking ill of any of them is a deviation from Islamic teachings.
As the Quran states:

"The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and so have the believers. All of them have believed in God, His angels, His books, and His messengers, saying: 'We make no distinction between any of His messengers.' And they said:
"We hear and we obey. Grant us Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the final return."
Quran (2:285)

A Muslim loves Moses and Jesus just as much as he loves Muhammad, and he honors them all equally. When a Jew converted to Christianity at the time of Christ, he won Jesus in addition to Moses. Similarly, when a Christian converts to Islam today, he retains Jesus and Moses while winning Muhammad. May God's blessings be upon Muhammad, and upon all the prophets and messengers.

The Books

The Quran

The Quran is the miracle of the prophet Muhammad .ﷺ It is a book no man could produce. To claim that Muhammad authored it is, as if divinity is being ascribed to him.

Muhammad was illiterate, he could neither read nor write. He never attended a school, nor was there one in his town. He did not grow up in a center of civilization but in a village hidden beyond the sands of the desert, unknown to Rome, to Constantinople, or to the palaces of Persia. The people of that land had no knowledge of Greek or Roman philosophy, never exposed to the literature of India or Iran. His village had no scholars, no researchers.

Could such a man produce a book like the Quran? Look at the history of the great geniuses of every nation and every age, have you seen in them anything like this? Mozart composed music before he was ten years old. Shakespeare left behind a treasury of literature, though he was not counted among the most learned men of his time. Such things are possible: a gifted youth may compose a brilliant novel, or put forward a new scientific theory. Genius is not confined to the formally educated; it may appear where least expected. But the greatest minds in history, whether in science, literature, or art, were only a step ahead of their time: a generation, perhaps a century. Their brilliance had limits.

Muhammad ,ﷺ however, under circumstances entirely unlike theirs, brought forth a book that, unparalleled in literary style and beauty. In law, reaches perfection in justice and balance; in theology and the unseen, reveals truths no man could have discovered on his own. In nature, it refers to laws and phenomena unknown to anyone of his age, or of the centuries that followed. Some of these hints were not validated until over thirteen hundred years later, while others remain to this day beyond human discovery.

God commanded that this book be set forth as a challenge to all:
“Produce ten chapters like it… or even a single chapter.”
No one was able to the challenge, until now. Its miraculous nature persists. However, do not seek, as some scholars of rhetoric once did, to seek its miracle in one single element: not only in its language, nor only in its knowledge of the unseen, nor in any single aspect at all. Its miracle lies in the whole.

The miracles of earlier prophets occurred once or for a certain period. However, Muhammad's miracle lives on throughout history. The miracles of earlier messengers were signs outside their message. The miracle of Muhammad is his very message itself. May God’s blessings be upon him, and upon his brother, prophets and messengers.

The Other Revealed Books

We believe in the Quran, and in the other scriptures of which the Quran has informed us. These are: the scrolls of Abraham, the scrolls of Moses (the Torah), the Psalms of David, and the Gospel of Jesus. The Quran stands as the final authority over them, the criterion for distinguishing what is still true from what has changed the original message.

As God says:

"And We have revealed to you the Book in truth, confirming what came before it of the Scripture and as a guardian over it..."
Quran (5:48)

Thus, whatever the Quran affirms from those earlier books, we believe in. Whatever agrees with the Quran, we hold to be preserved in its truth, untouched by distortion. But whatever contradicts the Quran, we recognize as altered from its original form.

The Divine Decree (Qadar)

Belief in destiny (Qadar), is one of the foundations of faith. It is to affirm that all things, both good and evil, occur by the knowledge, will, and decree of God. Nothing comes into being outside His wisdom, and nothing escapes His command. What He wills happens unfailingly, and what He does not will never be.

The verses that speak of Q*adar*
"There is not a thing but that with Us are its treasures, and We do not send it down except in a known measure"
Quran (15:21)

"Indeed, We have created all things according to a measure"
Quran (54:49)

"He blessed the earth and apportioned its sustenance"
Quran (41:10)

"And the moon—We have determined for it phases ..."
Quran (36:39)

Is that Q*adar* refers to the measuring out, and laws God has established for the universe: the order He has set, the system by which it runs, and the natural laws by which it is governed.

Everything within creation has been brought into existence with exact proportions and precise balance. Nothing exists without first having been measured—its substance, the number of its atoms, the types and amounts of elements composing

it, how it will combine with or separate from others, and the movements or stillness it will undergo. All of this was determined from eternity.

This belief does not deny human responsibility. Everyone has the ability to choose and act, and he/she is judged based on what he/she earns. However, the choice and the circumstances that surround it all lie within the encompassing will of God. There is no conflict, God decrees, and man acts within the sphere of that decree.

Faith in destiny brings peace to the heart. One does not boast over blessings, for he knows they are a gift entrusted to him. Nor does he despair in hardship, for he knows it was written with wisdom. It instills humility, patience, and faith in God, while protecting the soul from the pain of regret and the arrogance of pride.

To believe in Qadar, then, is to walk through life with trust, striving with effort, yet surrendering the outcome to the One whose knowledge encompasses all things.

Judgement Day

Death

Humans are deeply attached to long hopes and ambitions. Explains why Death is the closest thing to our senses, and yet the farthest from our thoughts. We watch funerals pass by us each day, yet we feel as though our turn is far away. We walk behind the coffins, but our minds wander to worldly matters. We see graves, yet we forget that one day we too shall be in one of them.

Generally, we avoid thinking about death, but a believer remains conscious of it. He prepares to meet it, through repentance, seeking forgiveness, protecting and restoring the rights of others. He recalls the Hereafter, fears the anguish that may come after death, but also looks forward with hope to the rewards that await.

The Day of Resurrection

Faith in the Last Day, the Day of Resurrection, is the second pillar of belief. In the Quran, belief in God is rarely mentioned without being paired with belief in the Hereafter. The believer keeps this day ever in mind, driving him/her to increase in good deeds, hoping for the reward, and avoids sins as much as he/she can, fearing the punishment. When tempted by a forbidden pleasure, he recalls the pain of the Hereafter that would follow its indulgence and so turns away. And when faced with a difficult duty, he remembers the reward of the Hereafter and so compels his self to endure and embrace it.

The Quran makes it clear that no one among creation knows when the last Hour will come; its knowledge belongs to God alone:

"They ask you about the Hour: say, its knowledge rests only with my Lord. None shall disclose it at its time but He ..."
Quran (7:187)

The Quran also affirms that it will arrive suddenly

"Bringing about the Hour would only take the blink of an eye, or even less."
Quran (16:77)

Yet before it comes, strange events will unfold in the universe. There are also matters foretold in authentic hadith but not detailed in the Quran: that knowledge will be withdrawn, ignorance will spread, wine will be drunk, fornication will become common, men will decrease and women multiply, trust will become rare, and society's order will be overturned. Then will come the appearance of the Antichrist, and afterward the descent of Jesus, upholding the law of the final Messenger, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him and his fellow messengers.

The Beginning of the Hour

The Quran refers to the last Hour in many verses and indicates that its onset will be marked by a tremendous earthquake. It will strike, God knows best, while there is still life on earth. At that moment, mankind will be seized by overwhelming fear and universal dread. Its force will be so severe that a mother will forget her nursing infant, despite the instinctive compassion God has placed in her heart. People will lose their very grasp on reason, staggering around as if drunk

"Though they are not drunk, but the punishment of God is severe."
Quran (22:2)

This earthquake precedes the final Resurrection as God's reveals in the Quran

"When the earth is shaken with its quake, and the earth brings forth its burdens, and man cries out: What is the matter with it?"
Quran (99:1-3)

Cosmic Events

The Day of Resurrection, and all that follows, belongs, as has already been said, to the unseen. Human senses cannot encompass it as they do material creation, nor can human reason pass judgment on it as it does with worldly events. We are limited to reflecting on the revealed texts and grasping their meanings.

The Quran contains clear verses indicating that many of the cosmic patterns, what we conventionally call the "laws of nature", will undergo change and disruption. It is as though their continuation is bound to the continuation of worldly life itself; when the term of this life comes to an end, so too will the span of these laws. The universe we behold, despite its wondrous precision, appears to be but a temporary structure, running for a specific purpose and for a fixed duration.

Resurrection and Gathering

Every dead soul will be revived when the trumpet is blown. Each person will be raised in the very state of heart and mind in which they left this world, believing that only an hour or less had gone. This is like a man being hit by a car, falling unconscious for a few days, and then waking up unaware of how much time has passed. On the Day of Resurrection, humans will believe that they have only slept briefly before awakening.

On that Day, a man will see his closest friend and not ask about him, nor care for him. No one will be concerned with anyone but himself. He/she will flee from her brother, his mother and father, his wife and children. Indeed, he would wish to offer them up as ransom for himself, if ransom were to be accepted.

All will be gathered, the whole of humanity, from Adam to the last of his descendants those who died in their beds, drowned in the sea, were killed, those who fell from the skies, and burned till their ashes were scattered in the wind. He who created them from nothingness will restore and gather them all, driving them to the plain of Judgment. Then our Lord will order Hell to come, looming over the people from far.

And He will say:
"Did I not enjoin upon you, O children of Adam, not to worship Satan, for he is to you a manifest enemy, but to worship Me? This is the straight path. Yet he has led astray a great multitude of you. Will you not understand? This is the Hell you were promised"
Quran (36:60-62)

The Reckoning

Then comes the standing for judgment. The Scale of *perfect justice* will be set, one in which nothing is lost, not even the weight of a mustard seed, nor a speck of dust, nor a single electron drifting in the space of an atom, nor anything smaller. Every deed will be accounted for, every circumstance measured, every intention laid bare. A pure heart and sincere devotion will weigh heavily on the side of good deeds, while hypocrisy and arrogance will be on the side of misdeeds.

It will be a fair trial, where nothing can aid a person except the works he has sent ahead, together with the mercy of his Lord. Wealth will do him nothing, except what he spent for God's sake and in His cause. Status will grant him no advantage, unless he used it in obedience to God. On that Day, no one will benefit another, and no soul will hold power over any soul.

The Records and Scrolls (Unveiled)

These scrolls in which all our deeds are recorded throughout life remain hidden. If a believer sincerely repents of the sins written therein, they are erased; but if he does not, they remain.

Only in judgement day, the scrolls will be opened and made public. Like examination results, at first known only to the examiners. But once the results are

announced, all come to know and failing students will be disgraced. Worse here, the disgrace will be before all creation. This is the great humiliation, and the one who fails here is cast into Hell. If he is a disbeliever, he loses eternal happiness and inherits everlasting torment.

The scrolls will be spread out and handed to their owners. Each person will see his book unrolled before him, and it will be said

"Read your record, You ˹alone˺ are sufficient this Day to take account of yourself.*"*
Quran (17:14)

Those whose good deeds outweigh the rest will receive their record in their right hand, a glad tiding that they will be judged with ease. Seeing what is written, they will rejoice as a student who reads his exam results and finds success, eager to share his success with friends and peers. But those whose sins outweigh their good will receive their record in their left hand. They will fall into despair and cry

"And as for those given their record in their left hand, they will cry ˹bitterly˺, nor known anything of my reckoning! *nor ever known what my account was!* I wish death was the end*!* My wealth has not benefited me! My authority has been stripped from me.*"*
Quran (69:25-29)

When the disbelievers are called to account, they will resort to denial. They will swear falsely to their innocence, imagining themselves before a human judge, deceived by appearances. However, they forget that they are before the Lord of all worlds, who sees the secrets of hearts and knows the hidden depths of the soul. Then God will stop their lips, preventing them from speaking, and command their entire body to bear witness. Their hands will confess the forbidden actions they committed.

"On this Day We will seal their mouths, their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will testify to what they used to commit."
Quran (36:65)

The Final Destination

At the end, sadly the disbelievers will be driven towards Hell. If they had only listened to the message and reminders, reflected upon themselves and the universe around them, they would have been guided to God, believed in Him, and followed His messengers and saved from Hell.

"And they will say: If only we had listened or used our reason, we would not be among the companions of the blazing fire. So they will confess their sin, but far removed are the companions of the fire"
Quran (67:10-11)

As for Paradise, is not gained by wishful thinking or desire, but through faith, obedience and action.

"It is not by your hopes, nor by the hopes of the People of the Book. Whoever does evil will be requited for it."
Quran (4:123)

The believer who wins Paradise is either one who actively does good, calling others to God, striving to exalt His word, working for His cause with his life, his wealth, and his tongue, or, if unable to do so, at least one who does not surrender to evil, but endures with patience whatever trials he meets for holding fast to his faith. Such are the steadfast.

When the judgement is complete for the believer, the glad moment arrives:

"And those who feared their Lord will be driven to Paradise in groups. When they arrive at it, and its gates are flung open, its keepers will say: 'Peace be upon you; you have done well, enter it, to abide forever.' And they will say: 'Praise be to God, who fulfilled His promise to us and made us inherit the land, that we may dwell in Paradise wherever we will. How excellent is the reward of those who labored!"
Quran (39:73-74)

Part 5 | The Fruits of Faith (Iman)

Among the fruits of faith, beautifully summarized by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the authentic hadith defining *Ihsan* (excellence in worship): *"Worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, then indeed He sees you."* *Sahih Al-Bukhari (Book2, Hadith 43)*

Remembrance of Allah (Thikir)

The first and most important fruit of faith is the act of remembering, mentioning, and being mindful of Allah with the tongue, heart, and actions. Nowhere in the Quran does God command anything as frequently as He commands remembrance (Thikir). Likewise, He praises no group more often than those who remember Him.

In the Arabic language of the Quran, remembrance carries multiple meanings, but mainly the remembrance of the heart (which refers to the mind and consciousness), and the remembrance of the tongue. Both are mentioned throughout the Quran, such as in His saying:

"O you who believe, remember the favor of God upon you."

If you wish to truly embody the quality of one who remembers God, then remember Him with your heart and mind, in solitude, in company, in the marketplace, on the road, in every place and at every moment. Remember Him constantly, in all conditions. Know that God sees you, so let your actions be only what pleases Him.

- If you perform an obligation, do so with the awareness that you are fulfilling His command.
- If you avoid a forbidden act, do so in obedience to His prohibition.
- If you engage in something permissible, intend it for God's sake so that it becomes an act worthy of reward.
- If you are faced with two choices, choose the one that brings you nearer to Paradise and distances you from the Fire.
- And if you forget and fall into sin, then remember, repent, and seek His forgiveness.

As the Quran states:

"Indeed, when Satan whispers to those mindful of Allah, they remember ˹their Lord˺ then they start to see things clearly."
Quran (7:201)

Also, remember God with your tongue. The most virtuous form of remembrance is that which involves both tongue and heart. If the mind is absent and unaware of what the tongue is uttering, the benefit is diminished.

The highest form of verbal remembrance is the recitation of the Quran, except in certain situations where specific words of remembrance are prescribed, such as glorifying God during bowing and prostration in prayer. Among the best forms of remembrance are the invocations authentically transmitted from the Messenger of God ﷺ.

True remembrance is not just about moving your tongue, but a constant awareness that shapes thought, action, and intention.

Fear and Hope

A believer must remain balanced between fear of God's punishment and hope in His mercy. He remembers that God is swift in reckoning and severe in punishment, this awakes the heart. But he also recalls that God is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful, and the Most Compassionate of those who show compassion, this brings hope.

If fear alone overtakes the heart, it may lead to despair. And despair from God's mercy is itself a sign of disbelief, as the Quran declares:

> *"Indeed, none despairs of relief from God except the disbelieving people."*
> *(Quran 12:87)*

As mentioned earlier, the Creator is unlike His creation. Fear of God is not like fear of worldly beings. It is a reverent, awe, seeing the greatness of God that draws one closer to Him, not away.

A true believer should always strive to remain between these two states, fear and hope. When he recites in prayer:

"The Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful,"
his heart inclines toward hope. And when he says:
"Master of the Day of Judgment,"
he is stirred with fear and awe.

Today, many Muslims tend to lean heavily on hope, relying on God's mercy, while giving little weight to fear of His punishment. Yet, even if a Muslim fulfills the basic obligations and avoids major sins, and so may be counted among the God, fearing, he risks missing out on the higher ranks in Paradise. His standing may be like that of a student who barely passes an exam, he does not fail, but neither does he earn honors or rewards. His success is "sufficient," but not "excellent."

Relying on God (Tawakkul)

God Almighty says:

"If you truly believe in God, then place your trust in Him."
Quran (10:84)
And He says:
"Indeed, God loves those who rely upon Him."
Quran (3:159)

What exactly is *tawakkul*, reliance on God, and what does it truly mean?

We have already established that God created in this universe causes that bring benefit and causes that bring harm. He placed natural laws and means that lead to outcomes. The question then: does relying on God mean abandoning all these causes and means?

Some people have mistakenly believed that true reliance on God lies in abandoning effort altogether. They refuse to work for a living, hoping provision will reach them without striving. They leave their sick untreated, expecting healing without medicine. They venture into the desert without food or water, expecting sustenance to come miraculously. They neglect seeking knowledge, assuming it will be granted without study.

Such notions go against both reason and Islamic teachings as God says:

"Disperse through the land and seek the bounty of Allah."
Quran (62:10)

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"O servants of God, seek treatment."
He also said:
"Take provisions."
And he declared:
"Seeking knowledge is a religious obligation on every Muslim."

So whoever neglects the pursuit of knowledge, imagining it will come without effort, is violating both divine law and natural order.

On the other hand, there are materialists, people who believe only in what they can see, who assume that causes alone produce results. They think medicine heals by itself, and that effort alone guarantees success. However, this is also false.

The cause may be present, but the result may not follow. A person may take medicine yet not recover. Two patients with the same illness, treated by the same doctor, using the same medication, one recovers, the other dies. A farmer may plough his land with the best equipment, plant the finest seeds, and apply the most expensive fertilizers, only to see all his effort ruined by a sudden frost, heatwave, drought, or flood. The presence of causes does not guarantee results.

Therefore, it is neither reasonable to neglect the means, nor is it wise to depend on them as if they alone determine outcomes. What reason affirms, and what religion commands, is that one should take all necessary means and then turn to God, asking Him for the outcome.

Study diligently, revise all your lessons, then put your trust in God and pray for success. That is true *tawakkul*.

Tawakkul is not about neglecting effort or disregarding the laws God set in His creation. Nor is it forgetting that God alone is the one who brings benefit and harm. Means are necessary, and using them is part of obeying God and following His order in the universe. But the means are not enough on their own. The outcome is in God's hands.

Thus, true reliance on God means exerting every possible effort, using every lawful and practical means, all while fully believing that it is God alone who brings about the result. The one who relies on God in this way is the true *mutawakkil*, the one who places his trust in the Almighty.

Gratitude

True gratitude begins when a person is content with what God has given or withheld. Whether in abundance or in lack, he remains satisfied, and it is in this state that the quality of thankfulness takes root.

Gratitude is one of the fruits of faith. When someone does you a favor and you fail to thank them, you are considered neglectful, perhaps even disrespectful. But what about God, the true source of all goodness? How can one not appreciate the One who gifted you with hearing and sight, with health and safety, who subjected the forces of the earth for your benefit, and showered you with blessings too numerous to count?

People often don’t realize the value of a blessing until they lose it. A toothache makes one realize the gift of being pain-free, yet once the pain is gone, the blessing is forgotten. When someone falls in poverty, he understands the value of wealth, but once he is comfortable, he forgets what it means to need. If the power goes out and darkness fills the house, only then does one appreciate the gift of light, yet when the lights return, we forget again.

If you cannot begin to count the blessings God has given you, how could you not thank Him?

Gratitude can be expressed in many ways, but mainly:

- **With the tongue**, by praising and acknowledging God's grace, saying:
  "All praise is due to God... O Lord, to You belongs all praise."

- **With action**, by sharing your blessings with those who have been deprived. The gratitude of the wealthy is to help the poor. The gratitude of the strong is to support the weak. The gratitude of those in power is to uphold justice and protect the rights of others. If you are well, off, and your table is filled with five kinds of food, yet your neighbor goes hungry and you offer nothing, then you are not truly grateful, even if you repeat *"Alhamdulillah"* a thousand times.

- **With the heart**, by being inwardly satisfied with what God has given you. You do not hate your situation, neglect the blessings, or envy others for what they have.

Whoever combines all three, gratitude of the heart through contentment, gratitude in action by helping others, and gratitude of the tongue through praise, is truly grateful.

Patience

Patience comes in different forms, each with its own unique challenge and reward.

1. Patience in the Face of Hardship

A believer lives between two blessings: when granted ease, he is thankful and is rewarded for it; and when afflicted with hardship, he bears it with patience and is rewarded as well.

This life was never meant to be a paradise. It is not free of hardship or sorrow, illness may strike, wealth may be lost, loved ones may pass away, friends may betray us, or security may fade. This is simply the nature of life, it was not created to be pure and problem-free:

"We will certainly test you with a touch of fear and famine and loss of property, life, and crops. Give good news to those who patiently endure."
Quran (2:155)

With time, those who are patient begin to forget the pain and see the reward, while others continue to carry the bitterness of their trials without benefit. Life's tribulations are inevitable. You either respond with patience and be rewarded, or you rage against them, only to multiply your grief and remain helpless before what has already come to pass.

2. Patience in Resisting Sins

This is the patience of the young person who, though tempted by what he sees, he resists and lowers his gaze out of fear of God. He knows the paths of forbidden pleasures but chooses to avoid them, though they appeal to his desires.

It is the patience of the employee who is offered a bribe worth six months of his salary, yet he turns it down despite his need.

It is the patience of the student who could cheat during an exam but refrains, even though his success may depend on it.

Sins are tempting and pleasurable to the *"Nafs"*. But to hold back from them while having the ability to indulge is a mark of true patience, and those who do so are counted among the patient.

3. Patience in Performing Acts of Worship

This is the patience of rising for dawn prayer, leaving behind the comfort of sleep and the warmth of one's bed.

It is the patience of enduring hunger and thirst during long summer fasts.

It is the struggle of compelling a heart that loves wealth to give charity and pay zakat.

And it is the patience of holding firmly to one's faith in a time when doing so has become increasingly difficult.

Whoever bears these burdens purely for the sake of God, seeking only His reward, is among:

"These ˹believers˺ will be given a double reward for their perseverance, responding to evil with good, and for donating from what We have provided for them."
Quran (28:54)

Patience, then, is not passive endurance, it is and action and a powerful form of faith.

Submission

We've said that faith has an inward dimension when it's a matter of the heart. People can judge only what is outward, so we distinguish the believer from the non-believer by their words and actions. In this context, *Islam* becomes the outward expression of *faith*.

In the Arabic language, the word *Islam* means submission. The root verb *aslama* (to submit) and *sallama* (to surrender) carry the same meaning. A child submits to his father out of trust. A lover surrenders to the beloved out of longing. The defeated yield to the victor out of fear. But the believer submits fully and unconditionally to the judgment of his Lord. He obeys every command, even if he doesn't fully understand its wisdom or see its benefit. He avoids every prohibition, even if he doesn't know the wisdom behind it.

This form of submission has two dimensions:

- **The practical dimension**, which is obedience in word and deed. This will be discussed, God willing, in another book dedicated to *Islam*.
- **The inner dimension**, which we address here as part of our discussion on *faith*, and that is the **contentment of the heart** with God's decree, the inner peace found in accepting His rulings.

It is to perform religious duties and abstain from prohibitions out of conviction, not out of resentment, hesitation, or internal rejection.

God says:

"But no, by your Lord, they do not truly believe until they make you (O Prophet) the judge in their disputes..."
This refers to the **outward** acceptance.

Then He continues:

"But no! By your Lord, they will never be ˹true˺ believers until they accept you ˹O Prophet˺ as the judge in their disputes, and find no resistance within themselves against your decision and submit wholeheartedly"
Quran (4:65)

This refers to the **inward** acceptance.

It is not enough to merely refer a matter to the Prophet's judgment if our hearts do not believe in the truth of his ruling, and be content with it.

God describes the true believers saying:

"The only response of the ˹true˺ believers, when they are called to Allah and His Messenger so he may judge between them, is to say, "We hear and obey." It is they who will ˹truly˺ succeed."
Quran (24:51)

Some people constantly demand to know the rationale behind every command or prohibition, as if they will not obey unless they understand the wisdom behind it. Without doubt, every ruling carries wisdom. Some of that wisdom may be apparent, through the text , while some remains hidden. But if the wisdom is unknown, does that give us license to disobey our Lord?

It is our duty to obey God in times of ease and hardship, whether the command aligns with our desires or not. We must not seek out scholarly opinions simply to justify our personal inclinations. Nor should we elevate foreign cultures and norms to the level of divine proof, reshaping sacred texts to fit them, twisting clear meanings to suit the mood of the age. And when society's norms change, we don't shift our interpretation yet again to keep pace.

No, true submission means turning to every command, applying it, accepting it with contentment and trust. That is the way of the sincere believer, one who truly affirms the truth of this religion.

Repentance

God created the man and instilled in his nature the love for rapid fulfillment, long hopes, a desire to acquire wealth, an inclination toward sexual temptation, anger, and a tendency toward aggression and revenge. He also allowed Satan to have influence, beautifying misdeeds and luring people to disobey. Added to this is the *nafs* (the-self), which is which is vulnerable to evil and sides with Satan in tempting the soul toward sin.

As a result, humans inevitably commit sins and fall into disobedience. So what is one to do to escape the consequences of sin?

In His mercy, God opened the door of *repentance*.

He declared: you can erase your record of every sin you've ever committed, as if it never happened. In fact, *sometimes* a sin you repented from may even be transformed into a *good deed*. As He says:

"Except for those who repent, believe, and do righteous deeds. For them God will replace their bad deeds with good ones. And God is ever Forgiving, Merciful."
Quran (25:70)

The door of repentance remains open for as long as a person is healthy and alive. If they turn to God with sincere repentance, it will be accepted. This door only closes at the moment of death, when the soul sees with certainty what the Messenger had conveyed through revelation. At that point, repentance becomes meaningless, because true repentance is a *voluntary return* to God, whereas the dying soul returns by force. At that stage, confession is too late, for the freedom to choose has already ended.

As the Quran says:

"God only accepts the repentance of those who do evil out of ignorance and then repent soon after. It is they to whom God will turn in forgiveness. And God is ever Knowing and Wise. But repentance is not accepted from those who continue to do evil deeds until death comes to one of them and he says, 'Now I repent,' nor from those who die as disbelievers..."
Quran (4:17-18)

The Conditions of True Repentance

1. **Refrain from Sin Immediately**

   Repentance has both a spirit and a body. Its spirit is *realizing the ugliness of sin*, and its body is *abstaining from it*.
   It's like someone walking on a road and seeing a sign that tells him he's going the wrong way. He feels disturbed, that's the internal realization. But if he ignores that knowledge and keeps going, it will not benefit him. In fact, he becomes even more blameworthy than the one who didn't know. Because the one who knows and chooses to disobey has no excuse.

2. **Replace Evil with Good**
   You complete your repentance by not only stopping sin, but by **reforming your actions** and **amending your behavior**.
   As in the verses:
   a. *"Your Lord has prescribed mercy upon Himself: that whoever among you does wrong out of ignorance and then repents and reforms, then He is indeed Forgiving, Merciful."*
   b. *"But whoever repents after his wrongdoing and reforms, God will turn to him in forgiveness."*
   c. *"Except for those who repent, reform, and make clear (what they had concealed), I will accept their repentance."*

      True reform means genuine change and a firm commitment not to return to the sin. If you sincerely make this commitment and then fall into the sin again due to weakness or circumstance, and you repent again, God will forgive you, *even if it happens repeatedly*.

      However, if your intention from the beginning is not honest. You think "I'll repent now, but if I feel tempted again I'll go back to the sin", then your repentance is not genuine and not accepted.

3. **When the Sin Involves the Rights of Others**
   If your sin harmed another person, if you stole from them, physically hurt them, slandered their honor, testified falsely, gossiped about them, spread rumors, you must return their right, seek their forgiveness, or ask God to make them content on

your behalf on the Day of Judgment. Otherwise, your repentance will not be accepted in full, and the wronged party may take from your good deeds, or you may bear some of their bad deeds on the Day of Judgment.

Never Despair of God's Mercy

No matter how many sins you've committed, **the door remains open**. No one should ever despair of God's mercy. In fact, despair itself is a sin greater than many acts of disobedience.

"Say, O My servants who have transgressed against themselves: do not despair of God's mercy. Indeed, God forgives all sins. He is truly the Most Forgiving, Most Merciful."
Quran (39:53)

This is the nature of the Most Merciful: always ready to forgive, to embrace those who return, and to grant a new beginning to whoever sincerely seeks it.

Seeking Forgiveness (Istighfar)

Seeking forgiveness (istighfar) means asking God to pardon one's sins. God commands and encourages it repeatedly throughout the Quran. He says:
"He who created you from the earth and settled you therein, so ask His forgiveness and turn to Him in repentance."
And also:
"Seek forgiveness of your Lord and then repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is Merciful and Affectionate."

This call to seek forgiveness appears on the lips of many prophets addressing their people:
"O my people, seek forgiveness of your Lord and then repent to Him."

Every prophet invited their community to follow the path of God's pardon and mercy, and to be saved from His punishment.

People differ in their standing regarding forgiveness:

- **The disbelievers who die in a state of polytheism or denial:** For these, there is no hope for forgiveness, as God states:
  "Indeed, Allah does not forgive associating others with Him."
  This applies equally to idolaters and disbelievers among the People of the Book. It is therefore not appropriate to say for one who dies a disbeliever: "May God have mercy on him," or "May God forgive him," or to call him "the late" or "the forgiven."

- **Sinners among Muslims who die without repenting:**
  Their fate rests with God's judgment. He may forgive them or punish them, as He says:

"And He forgives all besides that to whom He wills."
But even if they enter Hell, they will not remain there eternally, because they died affirming God's oneness.

- No one should underestimate the torment of Hellfire. If the fire of this world, which is far milder, were to strike a person, they would not endure it for even a moment. How then could anyone bear the eternal punishment of the Hereafter?

- **The sincere repenters:** Those who turn to God in genuine repentance find their sins erased by His grace. In fact, He replaces their misdeeds with good deeds.

- The highest rank among them are those who stop themselves before fully committing a sin, even while their desire and temptation remain strong. When the devil calls them toward wrongdoing and all means to it are ready, if they then remember God and turn away, while their heart still clings to the temptation, they receive a great reward. Only God can grant the strength and support to overcome such trials.

The Final Message

Islam is a faith that addresses all aspects of life. It is not limited to the mosque, but also applies to family matters, commerce, governance, peace, and even war. A true Muslim is one whose belief in the Quran shapes his actions, he/she maintains what it permits, avoids what it forbids, and follows its guidance in both private and public life.

Unlike religions that are limited to rituals, Islam is worship and law, knowledge and ethics, politics and justice, strength without oppression, and prosperity without greed. Every act that benefits humanity, if done sincerely for God's sake, is considered an act of worship. It's very first command was *"Read"*, a declaration that knowledge, whether in science, medicine, or any useful field, is a duty for the community. Wealth too is a blessing, so long as it is earned lawfully and remains a tool in the hand, not an idol in the heart.

Islam calls for excellence in both worlds: *"Our Lord, grant us good in this world and good in the Hereafter."* It seeks from Muslims sincerity in faith, obedience to God, and at the same time to be among the strongest, most knowledgeable, and most prosperous of nations, achieving the best of this life and the next.

It also entrusts every Muslim with a mission to present Islam with wisdom, gentle words, and upright character. There is no compulsion in faith; the role of the believer is to show Islam's beauty by good character and action.

A Muslim must be sound in reason, able to establish proof, knowledgeable in Islam, able to present it well, equipped in the ways of modern times, able to speak its language and knowing the local culture. He must know that in Islam everything rests upon evidence, reason, and proof, and that even those who dispute Islam are asked: *"Say, bring your proof if you are truthful."*

God Himself has promised to preserve the final message [7]

"It is certainly We Who have revealed the Reminder, and it is certainly We Who will preserve it."
Quran (15:9)

[7] https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/how-the-quran-was-preserved-during-the-prophets-time-mechanisms-of-oral-and-written-transmission